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ABSTRACT

The reading program described in this lesson plan outlines a "just for fun" book club that was a student-organized, student-driven reading experience that built community in the classroom and encouraged students to read independently, taking responsibility for their literacy learning. During 5 to 15 minute lessons every other day, students will: establish community rules for group formation and interaction; choose what to read and establish their own schedule for reading and discussing books, thus taking responsibility for their own literacy learning; and read for the sheer joy of it, learning to value one another as readers and learners. The instructional plan, lists of web and conventional resources, student assessment/reflection activities, and a list of National Council of Teachers of English/International Reading Association (NCTE/IRA) Standards addressed in the lesson are included. A favorite books file is attached. (PM)

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Book Clubs: Reading for Fun

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Adapted by
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Grade Band

3-5

Estimated Lesson Time

5 to 15 minutes every other day

Overview

Three fourth-grade girls—Angela, Janie, and Su Ling, of varying reading abilities—had decided to read Lois Lowry's *Number the Stars* together. They met every other day to discuss what they'd read and to decide how much to read next. Their predictions of what would happen next came naturally in the discussion, and the group worked to sustain the mighty efforts of Angela, who had to work hard to keep pace with the others.

This "just for fun" book club was a student-organized, student-driven reading experience that built community in the classroom and encouraged students to read independently, taking responsibility for their literacy learning.

From Theory to Practice

Book clubs are opportunities for students to choose what they read, when they read, where they read, how they read, and with whom they read. The key concept here is choice. Students value it.

Another key concept is to keep the book clubs special. You might do this by collecting book sets (two or three copies of the same text) and asking students to make a special request to borrow the books for their book club. At times, you may also invite book clubs to meet at small-group time during reading, which is a special occasion that gives your students a good deal of freedom and responsibility in running their own groups.

In order to carry out book clubs successfully, students must work together to negotiate places and times to meet, along with the pacing and discussion of the books. They take on responsibility for their own literacy learning. They learn to value one another as readers and learners.

This lesson is based on Deb Foertsch's Reading program, as described in Sierra-Perry, Martha. 1996. *Standards in Practice: Grades 3–5.* Urbana: NCTE. Pp.19-22.

Book clubs are designed to be student-centered; however, some teachers want more control over students' reading in book clubs. If you'd prefer a more structured book clubs system, see Raphael, Taffy E., Susan Florio-Ruane, and MariAnne George. "Book Club Plus: A Conceptual Framework to Organize Literacy Instruction." *Langauge Arts.* 79.2 (Nov 2001): 159-168.

Student Objectives

Students will

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- establish community rules for group formation and interaction.
- choose what to read and establish their own schedule for reading and discussing books, thus taking responsibility for their own literacy learning.
- read for the sheer joy of it, learning to value one another as readers and learners.

Resources

- Rachel's Compendium of Online Book Clubs Web Site
- Global Book Club Web Site
- Forming Book Clubs Web Site
- Tips on Starting a Book Club Web Site

Instructional Plan

Resources

- Multiple copies of texts for student groups to use, either from the library or your personal collection.
- Chart paper and markers.
- (Optional) Internet access to an online book club site where groups can post details about their readings.
- (Optional) McClure, Amy and Janice Kristo, Eds. 2002. *Adventuring with Books: A Booklist for Pre-K-Grade 6.* 13th Ed. Urbana, National Council of Teachers of English. This booklist may help the teacher choose books for students.

Preparation

1. Gather multiple copies of books from your school's library or your personal collection.
2. Check online book club resources to find sites appropriate for your students.
3. (Optional) Set up a favorite books file—a notebook located near the class library will work. This booklist in Amy McClure and Janice Kristo's *Adventuring with Books: A Booklist for Pre-K-Grade 6.* may be helpful in choosing books and showing an example of book lists.
4. Make copies of reading portfolio forms and book review forms, if desired.

Instruction and Activities

1. Explain the Book Clubs process to students:
   a. Students decide what to read and with whom they want to read it. While the groups are generically named book clubs, you may wish to widen the options for reading to include such resources as magazines, Internet sites, short stories, and reference articles. For example, a group of students might read and discuss *Sports Illustrated for Kids* or a group interested in fairy tales might read the various versions of Snow White available at the Scholarly Snow White Web site.
   b. Students read the book, discussing it along the way. The book clubs happen outside of school, at recess, and at times during small-group reading. Students meet every other day or so (or as often as they wish) to briefly discuss what they have read and to map out how much to read next. They may discuss what will happen next in the book, how they feel about what they've read so far, or how the book compares to other books that they have read.
   c. Students share the book with others or sign up and meet with you for a "lunch bunch" conference. A "lunch bunch" conference is an informal chat about the book that the club has finished reading. These sessions are held at lunch or recess, and you and students discuss

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the reading just for pleasure.

d. (Optional) Book club members can post their reactions to their reading on an Internet book club site or add the book to the class's favorite books file (You may provide a review form for favorite books).

2. Ask students to set ground rules for interacting in Book Clubs. As students brainstorm rules, write them on chart paper so that they can be posted in the classroom.

   Ideally, students will come up with rules that support community. The most important rule to establish is a "No 'ugliness' rule: "No 'ugliness' about who's reading what with whom." The rules should establish that there is no room for comments like "Sam's not allowed in our book club." All students should work hard to support one another's reading efforts. If students help set these rules themselves, they'll feel a sense of ownership that will give the rules more strength than a set of rules that you post without their input.

3. Additionally, you and students may brainstorm "group-building" activities such as the following:

   - Groups may name themselves, decide on a club mascot, and so forth.
   - Each club may keep a group reading notebook or journal where they track their readings. They could decorate the journal as they desire.
   - Groups may decide on inquiry-based projects. For instance, a group might form to explore a special interest and search out specific information (for instance, a book club interested in soccer might seek out specific books related to that interest).

4. After you've explained the process, allow some class time for students to discuss the activity and establish their first groups. Any students who are not interested in this voluntary activity can read on their own during this first session.

Web Resources

Global Book Club
http://www.ncsu.edu/globalbookclub/
Global Book Club is a collection of book reviews and resources for middle school students. More sophisticated readers may find this site useful.

Tips on Starting a Book Club
http://www.readinggroupchoices.com/start_a_group.htm
Tips on Starting a Book Club provides questions which can help groups make basic decisions about what their group will do. You might edit this site's list of questions to customize it for the specific needs of your students.

Forming Book Clubs
http://www.phschool.com/curriculum_support/book_clubs/
Prentice Hall's "Forming Book Clubs" page can provide a starting place for groups setting structures for the class or for their individual club.

Rachel's Compendium of Online Book Clubs
http://www.his.com/~allegria/clubs.html
You might search Rachel's Compendium of Online Book Clubs to find sites appropriate for your students' interest. The list is all-inclusive and some of the online clubs will not be appropriate for your students. Use this site as a resource and pass on only the pertinent addresses to your students.

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Student Assessment/Reflections

Book Clubs are a voluntary, student-centered activity. The reading is not evaluated in the traditional way. When book club members join you in a "lunch bunch" meeting, you can rely on kidwatching to note how students are developing as readers; but there should be no formal assessment.

"Lunch bunch" meetings should be voluntary, not required. The meetings are an "extra" to encourage students' independent reading and chatting about the books.

If your students keep a reading portfolio or reading log, you should encourage, but not require, students to write about their book club readings in these documents as well. You may provide a form for reading portfolios to simplify recordkeeping for students.

NCTE/IRA Standards

1 - Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

11 - Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

12 - Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

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read•write•think

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Favorite Books File

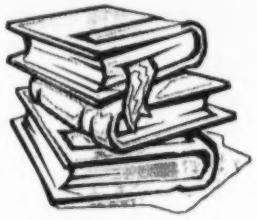
Book Title: _____

Book's Author: _____

This book is ☐ a Picture Book ☐ a Chapter Book

☐ Fiction ☐ Nonfiction

☐ Other _____



Summary (Don't give away the ending!)

_____

_____

_____

_____

What was your favorite quotable quote from this book?

_____

_____

_____

Recommendation

This book is ☐ Good ☐ Great ☐ Excellent

_____

_____

_____

_____

Reviewed by

_____

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